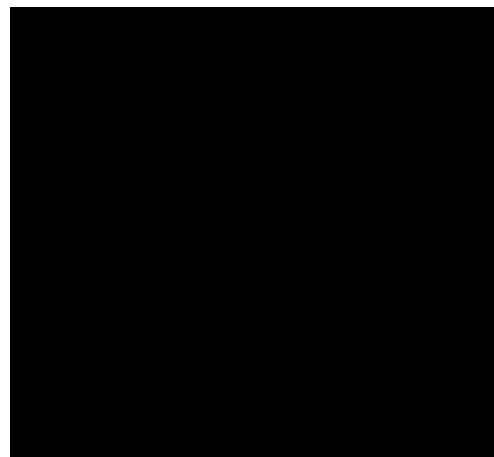


# USDA Joins "Walk a Mile In My Boots"

Five Western States Slated to Kick Off Program

NRCS HQ



## Inside...

Earth Team Volunteer  
Becomes NRCS Employee  
page 2

FY05 National Award Winners  
page 3

FY05 Earth Team Status Report  
page 3

Idaho Hosts Foreign Scientist  
page 3

Arizona Volunteers Enhance  
Water Quality Awareness  
page 4

Louisiana Volunteer Group  
Tops 7,000 Hour Mark  
page 5

Properly Identify NRCS  
and the Earth Team  
page 6

“Walk a Mile in My Boots” is expected to enhance the symbiotic relationship among government employees and agricultural producers through:

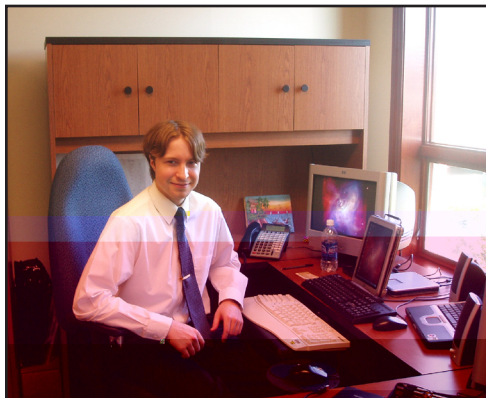
- Cultivation of relationships among government employees and producers that increase public awareness and support.
- Increased appreciation among government employees of rural lifestyles, agricultural production, and the economic pressures endured by agricultural producers.
- Increased understanding among producers of government agency and government employee conservation efforts and corresponding programs.
- Improved opportunities for producers, government agencies and government employees to voluntarily develop and implement effective conservation solutions that are viable alternatives to regulatory processes.
- Exploration of opportunities to increase the sustainability of lands, natural resources and agricultural livelihoods.

More information and the “Walk a Mile in My Boots” application is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/walkamile.html>.

## Maine

# NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Becomes NRCS Employee

By Elaine Tremble  
NRCS Public Affairs Specialist



Former Earth Team Volunteer Bill Voisine is now an NRCS Information Technology Assistant.

Volunteering with NRCS not only benefited Bill Voisine by giving him class credits, it helped him get a job shortly after graduation.

During summer breaks from Husson College in Bangor, Maine, Bill, a computer information systems major, became an Earth Team Volunteer and assisted NRCS Computer Specialist Dick Hunter in the State Office so

that he could receive additional class credits. Bill was a “can do” person, never saying “I don’t know” or “I can’t.” He became a valuable assistant on the three-person IT summer staff, assisting with the day-to-day computer support needs of the NRCS employees. He also assisted in creating customized programs for the UNIX operating system.

Information technology assistance soon became more than a two-person job in Maine, so when the vacancy went out the then graduated-and-experienced Bill Voisine applied and got the position. Already very familiar with NRCS technology, Bill stepped right in and pulled his weight right from the start. He came along just in time to assist with such projects as Windows XP conversion, the deployment of new computers, web page conversion, Toolkit deployment (two phases), server upgrade and Veritas. Bill also wrote a computer program, which received national recognition, that helped the NRCS employees use the Toolkit software.

Now that USDA IT staffs have moved to Information Technology Services, we can no longer claim Bill as a Maine NRCS employee. He has expanded his clientele from Maine NRCS employees to NRCS, Rural Development and Farm Service Agency employees, not only in Maine but in the six New England states. Multiple agencies and states will get to know the computer wiz that started out as an Earth Team Volunteer in Maine.

## FY06 Regional Earth Team Training Conference Planning Underway

Committees have been established to plan the FY06 Regional Earth Team Training Conferences.

Be on the lookout for more information about dates and locations!

## List Your Volunteer Opportunities at:

# [www.volunteer.gov/gov](http://www.volunteer.gov/gov)

Email [alan.benge@ia.usda.gov](mailto:alan.benge@ia.usda.gov)  
for more information

# FY05 National Earth Team Award Winners Announced

*CONGRATULATIONS to the following award winners:*



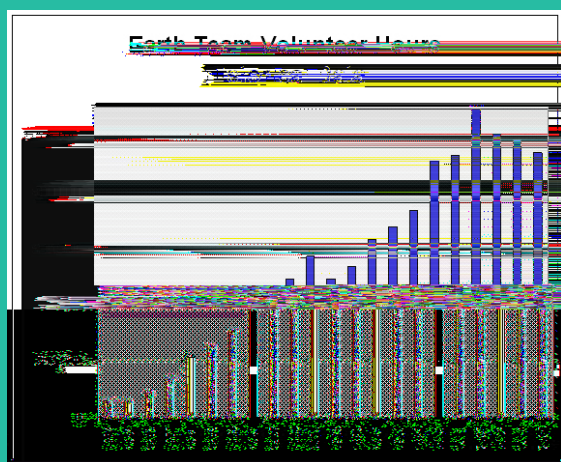
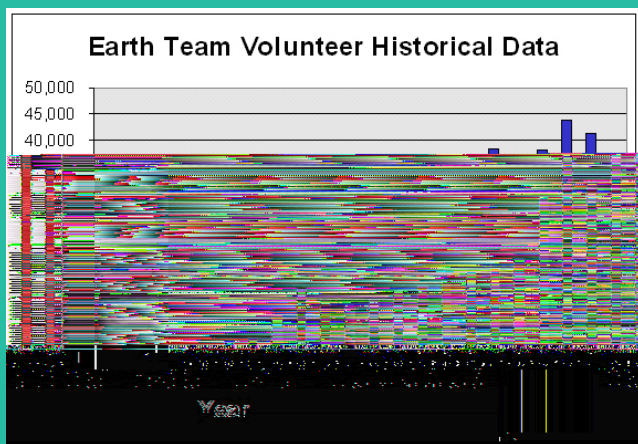
*Helping People  
Help the Land*

Award items have been ordered and will be shipped to State Volunteer Coordinators in early January.

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Chief's Cup</b>   | Kansas   |
| <b>NACD/NRCS</b>     | Edwards County Conservation District, Kinsley, Kansas        |
| <b>RC&amp;D/NRCS</b> | CAWACO RC&D, Birmingham, Alabama                             |
| <b>Individual</b>    | Margaret Magruder, Clatskanie, Oregon                        |
| <b>Group</b>         | Nature's Wild Adventure Outdoor School Group, Dallas, Oregon |
| <b>Chief's Field</b> | Dallas Service Center, Dallas, Oregon                        |
| <b>NRCS Employee</b> | Mike Patterson, Norwalk, Ohio                                |

## National Earth Team Status Report through FY05

Earth Team volunteers continue to serve as a resource for NRCS with a value of over \$16.4 Million to the agency and providing 451 staff years during FY05. The Earth Team did experience a 20% decrease in the number of volunteers and a slight decrease in the number of hours.



### Idaho

## Idaho Plant Materials Center Hosts Foreign Scientist

**By Loren St. John and Bonnie A. Long**  
Idaho PMC Team Leader Idaho Earth Team Coordinator



The Aberdeen Plant Materials Center (APMC) hosted Dr. Tumenjargal, a visiting scientist from Mongolia during spring and summer 2005. Tumenjargal is a Professor of Agronomy at the Mongolian State University of Agriculture in Zaisan, Ulaanbaatar.

Rangelands of Mongolia and the Intermountain Region of the western United States are similar in climate, topography, and ecology. In Mongolia increasing human and livestock populations and associated problems with overgrazing are threatening plant cover in many areas. Tumenjargal received training at APMC that will allow her to help her country provide plant materials to Mongolian herders, develop alternative forage resources for subsistence operations, and help stabilize deteriorated Mongolian rangelands.



# Earth Team Volunteers Enhance Water Quality Awareness on WWMD

*By George Couch  
Arizona Earth Team Coordinator*

Arizona's Earth Team gathered water quality data and educated the public on World Water Monitoring Day (WWMD) October 18. WWMD is a yearly global event that positively impacts the health of our waters and watersheds. WWMD participants gather water quality measurements at any body of water. These results are then placed in a database and made available to the public.

World Water Monitoring Day is a global education and outreach event designed to promote personal stewardship and individual involvement in the protection of our world water resources. WWMD occurs every year on Oct. 18. From Sept. 18-Oct. 18, participants test 4 key indicators of water quality: temperature; pH; dissolved oxygen; and turbidity.

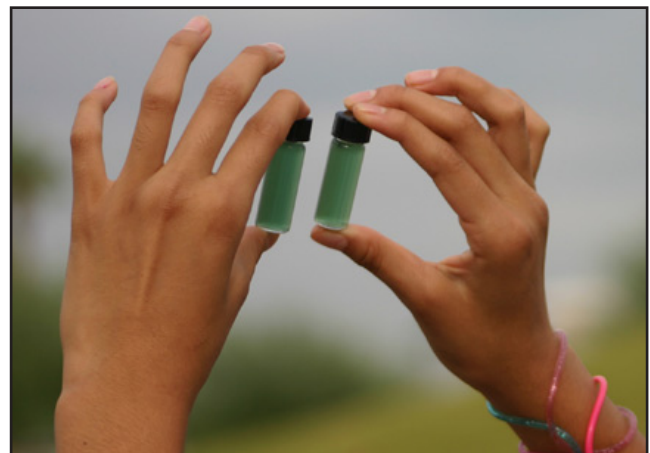
More information is available on the WWMD website at: [www.worldwatermonitoringday.org](http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org).



Students attend a program at Steele Indian School Park in Phoenix on World Water Monitoring Day, October 18.



**Above:** Earth Team Volunteer Elizabeth Boettcher explains World Water Monitoring Day test results to students during a program at Steele Indian School Park.



**Left and Above:** Students examine water samples collected by Earth Team Volunteers. Earth Team Volunteers collected the samples between Sept. 18 and Oct. 18, tested the samples for four key water quality indicators and shared their results with the public on WWMD.

# Alexandria Volunteer Group Tops 7,000 Hour Mark

**By Vickie Fontenot**  
*Louisiana Earth Team Coordinator*

Since 1994 the Louisiana Special Education Center (LSEC) has been an active participant with the Earth Team Program at Alexandria, La. The center is a residential facility with a 12-month school program which includes activities that enable the client to be an active member of the community. Clients at the center have orthopedic and mental disabilities.

The countless hours donated by these special individuals have been very beneficial to NRCS and encouraging to both the volunteer and agency. The clients and job coaches have provided over 7,000 hours since joining the Earth Team Program. Throughout the years the clients of this center have typed, edited and distributed newsletters highlighting volunteer program efforts; prepared envelopes for daily/weekly mail outs to more than 75 NRCS offices in Louisiana, Texas and Washington D.C.; and operated computers, copiers, electronic mail machines, and other office equipment. Clients helped public affairs specialists sort and file photographs and slides. Safety is also a top issue in the field. LSEC clients were instrumental in revising and typing a newer version of a safety booklet needed by all NRCS employees and volunteers.

In a state office atmosphere where large mail outs are daily routine, the assistance provided is worth gold. Not only has the group helped NRCS, but through the Earth Team Program several participants have worked with Rural Development.

This affiliation has given the clients a feeling of worth and made them feel part of the organization. They feel the work accomplished is needed and important to both facilities. The program is very successful for the Center and NRCS. The products produced are of high quality and accomplished with pride.

Several participants have remained in the program while others have gone to group homes to become part of the community.

Becky Elliot, LSEC Transition Coordinator, reports that the Earth Team helps students from the center develop job skills, social skills, increase self esteem and have a sense of purpose, plus they enjoy getting out of the center to do actual work.



LSEC Transition Coordinator Becky Elliot, Louisiana State Conservationist Donald W. Gohmert, Louisiana Earth Team Coordinator Vickie Fontenot, LSEC Superintendent Walter Gatlin, volunteer Kim Gotte and volunteer J. J. Wiley at an event recognizing the contributions of LSEC Earth Team Volunteers.

## **California**

### **Blythe Volunteers Partner to Improve Wildlife Habitat**



California Area 4 Earth Team Coordinator Elizabeth Lessick works along side volunteers Justin Olmsted, Kody Downs, Karys Downes, and Alyssa Whitson to load discarded Christmas trees onto a truck. Lessick and the volunteers partnered with the California Department of Fish & Game in an effort to turn discarded Christmas trees into wildlife habitat.

